8

Recipes for Co-Production with Children and Young People

Liam Berriman and Kate Howland with Fiona Courage

In this chapter, we reflect on the role of children and young people as 'co-producers' of our research. Over the course of the Everyday Childhoods project, we held a number of events and activities aimed at involving children in the research. Each event was conceived as an opportunity to experiment with different methods of co-production, drawing and building on participants' existing skills, knowledge and competencies. These events were inspired by models of 'public sociology' that seek to engage wider communities in the co-production of research (Burawoy 2005; Puwar & Sharma 2012).[1] In this chapter, we ask how 'co-production' can generate opportunities for enrolling young people's existing skills and knowledge to become partners in research: as data creators, consultants, or as data animators. The chapter focuses on three events staged at different moments in the Everyday Childhoods project – exemplifying ways of inviting young people into research. These examples

[1]The 'Public Science Project' at the Centre for Human Environments at CUNY (City University of New York) is particularly emblematic of this form of collaborative knowledge exchange research: https://www.gc.cuny.edu/Page-Elements/Academics-Research-Centers-Initiatives/Centers-and-Institutes/Center-for-Human-Environments/Research-Sub-Groups/Public-Science-Project-(PSP).

showcase three strategies of co-production: a media competition (Space Invaders), the project archive (Curating Childhoods) and a hackathon workshop (My Object Stories). Although each were conceived as activities in their own right, understood collectively, they shed light on the possibilities and challenges of co-production in research with children and young people. This discussion aims to provide insights into our successes, as well as the numerous unexpected problems and complications we encountered. The events are presented in chronological sequence.[2] Echoing the approach taken in Chapter 2, we present these as recipes for co-production, revealing the resources and methods required as well as our sources of inspiration.

Models of co-production

The Everyday Childhoods project involved contributions from researchers with a range of academic expertise, including youth studies, education, archiving, sociology, media studies, and human-computer interaction (HCI).[3] This cross-disciplinarity enabled us to combine and synthesize learning across several fields. Co-production has become particularly significant in youth studies and HCI scholarship over recent years. In youth studies, this has manifested in 'participatory research' approaches that involve young people as collaborators in research. In HCI 'participatory design' has become a central methodology for engaging young people as stakeholders in design processes. Here, we give a brief overview of the parallels between approaches to co-production with young people, and how these influenced our thinking.

One of the core features of youth studies has been to recognize and promote young people's agency and capacities for action in decisions affecting their lives. This has had a strong bearing on the design of research and can be observed in the rise of research studies where young people are significantly involved in the collection, interpretation and curation of research data. This ranges from providing young people with cameras to capture photographs or videos (Wilson 2016) to running theatre workshops in which young people reinterpret and reenact excerpts of data (McGeeney et al. 2017). In these instances, researchers try to provide young people with greater say and stake

[2]'Space Invaders' was a media competition held prior to the Face 2 Face study in 2013 and was led by Sevasti-Melissa Nolas and others colleagues at the Universities of Sussex and Brighton. 'Curating Childhoods' was an immediate follow-on project to the 'Face 2 Face' study (2014–15) and was carried out in collaboration with the Mass Observation Archive. 'My Object Stories' took place shortly after 'Curating Childhoods' and drew on the collaboration with Mass Observation and new partners in the Sussex Humanities Lab.

[3]The authors of this chapter represent each of these backgrounds, with Berriman from sociology/youth studies and Howland from informatics/HCI.

in different phases of a research project. This has often led to young people being explicitly defined as research 'co-investigators' or 'collaborators' (see for example with children: Bradbury-Jones & Taylor 2015; Lundy et al. 2011; and with young people: Tucker 2012).

In HCI, many researchers investigating and designing technology for children use participatory and co-design methods to ensure that the voices and ideas of potential end-users are included in the design process. Researcher Allison Druin pioneered an approach to bringing children and young people on to design teams, and characterized a continuum of roles for children in design research, which reflects increasing involvement: users, testers, informants, and design partners (Druin 2002). Druin and colleagues have strived to involve children as full design partners through their Kidsteam programme, in which children take roles on an intergenerational design team through twice weekly after-school sessions over the course of a year. Children take part as volunteers but are also given a technology gift (worth around $100) at the end of the year. Co-design and participatory design methods are now widely used by those carrying out interaction design research with young people, including hands on activities such as ideas generation and paper prototyping (Robertson et al. 2013). However, even in the most dedicated approaches to giving young people creative control, such as Druin's long-term collaborations, full equality of decision making and access to benefits from research are rarely achieved.

Outside of academic research, co-production methodologies have also been widely used in commercial product design and market research (Humphreys & Grayson 2008), including with children and young people (Berriman 2014; Buckingham 2011). Discussing new marketing techniques directed at children, Buckingham has argued that although market researchers have begun to adopt the rhetoric of children as 'active' participants in research and design, making children feel 'empowered' does not always equate to greater agency or power (Buckingham 2011: 94). Berriman likewise found in the creation of children's virtual worlds that the rhetoric of co-production was commonly found within design teams but that contributions were often highly asymmetric and uneven between children and adults and between different groups of children (Berriman 2014: 209). Though these critiques have often been levied at more commercial forms of co-production practices, the same scrutiny has not always been directed at co-production methodologies in academic research. A key concern with co-production is the extent to which its (often idealistic) rhetoric is supported by research that creates more equitable and symmetrical relationships between children and adults.

Critical discussion about participatory and co-production methodologies with children and young people have expanded over the last decade, particularly in terms of their ethical complexities (Bragg 2007). One of the key concerns has been the extent to which categories of 'adult-researcher' and

'child-research subject' persist as a default binary in research relationships – underlined by age, status and power differentials (Alderson 2008). Whilst this concern is not limited to co-production methodologies, it does bring into question how and whether existing power differentials can be surmounted. Concerns have also been raised in relation to children's compensation and reward for time spent as 'co-researchers' or 'co-designers' (Bradbury-Jones & Taylor 2015). These points have brought into question the extent to which research can be accurately labelled as a collaborative partnership when decisions and benefits from a project are unequally distributed.

Such critiques have prompted us to critically reflect on how decision making, resources, rewards and creative control have been distributed between the different parties involved in our own research activities (see Chapter 3 for a full discussion). In particular, we draw on sociologist David Oswell's (2013) argument that children's agency should be seen as distributed within wider socio-material arrangements. In this theoretical model, agency is not simply located in the individual, but rather is relationally negotiated and distributed within a socio-material arrangement. This approach provides a framework for evaluating the effectiveness of co-production in *redistributing* agency and decision making between children and adults. It prompts us to ask how co-production methods can configure roles so that each individual has the opportunity to contribute to, and benefit from, a project or event. As we reflect on each of our recipes of co-production, we will draw on this model of agency as a way of evaluating how effective our methods were in generating more equitable models of children's participation.

In the Everyday Childhoods project, we have sought active involvement from young people in generating and curating data, and in particular, have explored novel methods for including young people's voices in the communication of research findings. Each of our case studies draws on multiple disciplinary approaches and insights, and over the course of this chapter, we weigh up the success of this convergence of approaches. We have been sensitive to the ethical challenges that co-production can raise, particularly in ensuring that children and young people's involvement is rewarding and appropriately recognized, and that their time is compensated and not unduly wasted. At the same time, the legitimate need to reward can come into direct conflict with ethical concerns about coercing participation. Building on past discussions of co-production with youth, the present chapter reflects back on the strengths and limitations of different models of co-production with children and young people. In particular, we draw attention to: (1) how young people's participation varied in form, distribution and contribution across different events, (2) the distinct skills, knowledge and competencies young people brought to the research, and (3) the relevance and value of the events for the young people taking part.

The competition: 'Space Invaders'

Our first experiment in co-production was a public engagement event as part of a local festival, inviting young people's responses to public debates (particularly in the media) about the positive and negative impacts of digital technology on their lives. We asked young people to make short films as part of a competition where prizes would be awarded by a panel of judges.

Origins and inspirations

Competitions are a popular way of encouraging engagement and participation from young people, and place a clear value on the outputs. The promise of potential prizes and accolades can be effective in encouraging young people to put time and effort into producing a piece of media. With a carefully chosen brief, entrants can be encouraged to put forward their own take on issues of interest both through their message and their choice of media. However, the incentivization through prizes also brings with it difficulties of judging, including the potential for entrants to be swayed by what they think the judges wants to see and hear and the implication that some personal accounts of experiences are 'better' and more deserving of reward than others.

Our method was also partly inspired by the Mass Observation Archive's use of 'directives',[4] which invite members of the public to share their thoughts on a discussion topic of contemporary relevance (e.g. global warming or Brexit). The responses are then collated by the archive as a snapshot of opinion on the topic at that moment in time. Similarly, our method attempted to capture a snapshot of young people's perspectives on debates about digital media's role in their lives and to publish them on video sharing platforms for others to see.

Ingredients

- An online video upload platform
- Attention-grabbing advertising
- A judging panel of children and adults
- A venue for showcasing entries and awarding prizes
- Prizes

[4]http://www.massobs.org.uk/mass-observation-project-directives.

The event

Space Invaders was not explicitly a research activity, but a public engagement project that allowed researchers from different disciplines to experiment with ways of hearing young people's voices on the subject of digital media. It was formative in shaping the Face 2 Face and Curating Childhoods projects, influencing other forms of digital self-recording methods that we used.

To gather young people's opinions on and experiences with digital media, we devised a competition format which requested short video submissions across two different age ranges (11 and under, and 12–18).[5] Taking a deliberately open approach, we asked young people to tell us in 3 minutes how they use sites such as Facebook, Twitter and YouTube, as well as phone apps and online games. We highlighted concerns from some adults that 'children and young people are wasting their time and brains online using social and other media', and invited entrants to tell us about the good and bad in their media lives, commenting on what these media allowed them to do and how they could be improved. We placed no constraints on the formats of the videos, allowing for a wide range of filmmaking expertise. We advertised a technology prize for each age group (worth around £100), and asked for submissions to be uploaded to a video sharing site, with parents' permission, giving instructions for how to make videos private, if preferred.

We received thirteen submissions, four in the 11 and under category, and nine in the 12–18 category, all submitted via YouTube or Vimeo. The videos covered a wide range of topics, and adopted a number of different styles. The formats included videography, animation, video game footage, static graphics and audio, with most entries employing more than one of these. Many of the submissions explicitly addressed and responded to public debate around the topic of young people's use of digital media. Over half adopted documentary style formats, with voiceovers and interviews used to comment on the benefits and dangers of technologies. Home settings were most common, but there were also public and school backdrops. The submissions in the older age category of this type adopted common social media formats, such as talking head pieces to webcams, mainly in bedroom settings, spliced with other footage including that from 'real world' settings, news reports, and game video

[5]Information about the Space Invaders event, including links to the children's video entries, can be found here: https://circyatsussex.wordpress.com/2013/04/19/space-invaders-children-youth-and-public-spaces/. 'Space Invaders: Children, Youth and Public Space' (2013) was a project run by the Centre for Research and Innovation in Childhood and Youth (CIRCY) at the University of Sussex in collaboration with the School of Education at the University of Brighton. It was funded by the University of Sussex through the Higher Education Innovation Fund. The project was led by Sevasti-Melissa Nolas and the project team included Sara Bragg, Kate Howland, Avril Loveless and Rachel Thomson.

capture. The game footage included 'let's play' style clips with voiceover, and shorter excerpts which gave a quick view of different games.

The competitions entries adopted, subverted and satirized 'old' media approaches to reporting on technologies in young people's lives. The inclusion of 'old' media such as news reports was used in one 12–18 submission to highlight hysteria and overreactions to perceived threats from violent video games. The news report approach was also used in an 11 and under submission, but this time with the children taking on the roles of anchor persons to gently mock the gossipy style of entertainment news whilst addressing various social media topics.

In some entries there was clear frustration, and a perception that older generations point out the 'evils' of some popular technologies without really understanding how they work and how they are being used by young people. Overall, the tone was largely positive, with young people taking the opportunity to counter perceived concerns, and providing numerous examples of how these technologies can connect friends, families and even lost dogs.

The competition culminated in a public showcase and prize ceremony, in which excerpts from the videos were shown to a large audience as part of a local arts festival, and a debate on the use of social media was held by university students. The video entries were judged by an independent panel of adult experts, and young people's view were gathered through two local school visits. In these visits, we showed the entries to GCSE and A-Level media students at schools where none of the entrants attended. Following the screenings, we led facilitated discussions on the videos and asked for comments on each, as well as voting on which entry should win. The feedback from these youth panels was presented to the adult judging panel to be taken into consideration. The young people's choice for winner in each category was fairly clear, and these were ultimately agreed with by the adult panel, although there was some debate between the judges. The runner up choices were not so clear-cut, so we also awarded a 'young people's choice' commendation in each age range to recognize entries valued highly by the young judges but not awarded a prize. The prizes and commendations were taken very seriously by the entrants, and the winners were very happy. All the entrants received certificates, but it was clear that a few of those who were not awarded prizes or commendations were disappointed and we received some emails from aggrieved parents on some of the children's behalf. We also failed to realizes, until it was too late, that awarding a first prize, runner up and young people's choice commendation left only one entry in the youngest age category that wasn't singled out for specific praise. Using a competition format placed value on the work that we asked young people to do, but the awarding of prizes creates losers as well as winners.

Reflections

Through their video contributions, young people had an active involvement in setting the agenda for the Face 2 Face project around the role of screen-based technologies in young people's lives. They broadened our ideas of the kinds of technologies that were important, and reiterated the need for young people's voices and roles in debating and communicating these issues. In this model of co-production, young people were treated as competent creators, and given full control and responsibility for defining their message and choosing how to convey it. However, although we sought young people's feedback, which was taken into account, it was ultimately the adult judging panel that were given the final say on the winners. The competition format was successful in attracting considerable engagement from local young people, although the socio-cultural spread was not very wide, and around half the entrants had some form of direct or indirect link with the universities involved. The public showcase event was well attended by entrants, families, friends and others, and demonstrated the value that was seen in the work.

There were a number of ethical concerns to contend with in a competition model. The judging and prize giving elements of competitions need to be considered very carefully to avoid any indication that some entries were not valued. In the context of a research study, rather than a public engagement activity, these issues would become even more challenging, as the idea of 'judging' participant data is very problematic. In addition, consent and legal considerations must be considered very carefully. In the Space Invaders competition, parents were required to give consent and to take responsibility for uploading the videos, due to legal age restrictions on online platforms. To some extent, this necessary safeguarding may have detracted from the autonomy of the entries, as parents may have felt it necessary to vet the content, and young people in turn to moderate their messages.

Entering the archive: 'Curating Childhoods'

Our second experiment in co-production took place in partnership with the Mass Observation Archive during preparations for archiving the 'Everyday Childhoods' data collection. As Thomson describes in Chapter 3, our ethical discussions with participants often began with the archive – informing families from the beginning that their research contributions would form part of an archive. Over the course of the Face 2 Face project, it became increasingly clear that discussions about the archive (which often felt quite abstract for participants and researchers) should ultimately take place *in the archive*. This led

us to our follow-on project, 'Curating Childhoods', which involved a workshop at the Mass Observation Archive aimed at providing families with a say in the future archiving of their data.

Origins and inspirations

One of the drivers for the Curating Childhoods[6] project was a desire to bring together popular and professional practices of curating and archiving childhood. Over recent decades, 'curation' has expanded from the niche practices of galleries, archives and museums, to a wider range of popular practices of cultural sorting, cataloguing and ordering (Balzer 2015; Obrist 2015). Curation has also been seen as a practice undertaken by children. In the context of digital media, education researcher John Potter (2012) has described how curation has become a new form of digital literacy through which children and teenagers learn to cultivate profiles, pin boards and timelines. In an article on the 'The Secret Lives of Tumblr Teens', journalist Elspeth Reeve (2016) describes how some young people can achieve fame through curating popular Tumblr boards of 'found' online content, including gifs, memes and videos. These feeds can attract tens of thousands of followers, providing the young people behind them with cultural celebrity status as accomplished curators[7]. Alongside these digital practices, our research also observed how children's curation practices could take place in more personal and material forms that were not always as deliberate or public facing. As Berriman describes in Chapter 5, this could take the form of collecting and preserving toys and other items of significance in shoeboxes and photo albums. In these instances, curation is more focused on cultivating personal sites of memory that materialize links to special relationships, moments or events in time. In the Curating Childhoods project, our aim was to explore how children's existing ideas and practices of curation might inform our archiving of research data.

A further source of inspiration was from a professional site of curation: the Mass Observation Archive. We were particularly inspired to work with the Archive based on its long history as a site of co-production between archivists and members of the public. Since its founding in 1937, the Mass Observation Archive collection has been sustained by long-term partnerships

[6]'Curating Childhoods: Developing a Multimedia Archive of Children's Everyday Lives' (2014–15) was funded by the AHRC's 'Digital Transformations' theme and was led by Rachel Thomson, Liam Berriman and Fiona Courage. The project's reports and outputs can be accessed from: http://blogs.sussex.ac.uk/everydaychildhoods/curating-childhoods/publications-and-output/.

[7]'The curator' on social media bears some similarities with the categories of 'the geek' and 'the lurker' discussed in our moral map in Chapter 4. The curator, as described in Reeve's article, highly values their privacy and is admired by others for their skill at finding and re-publishing niche and obscure content.

with volunteers who submit regular diaries responding to directives. This form of public engagement with an archive was radical at the time of the Archive's establishment, and today remains a unique curated record of everyday life. For the most part, the Archive's diarists and contributors have been adults aged 18 and above. Records of children and young people's everyday lives, on the other hand, have remained conspicuously absent from the Archive's collection, with children's diary records only occasionally being collected through schools (see Box 8.1). The Curating Childhoods project was set up with the aim of increasing the visibility of children's lives in the Archive by establishing a new 'Everyday Childhoods' collection. The collection would initially be comprised of data from the Face 2 Face project, but would then be further expanded through regular invitations for children and young people (up to 18 years) to contribute to the archive by submitting self-documented accounts of their daily lives. Central to the project was the idea that young people should play a consultative role in the creation of the Archive, and that the archive should become a space accessible to children and young people. The project proposed to set up dialogues between archivists, researchers and children to explore what the ethics, practices and responsibilities of curating records of childhood should be. In doing so, these discussions aimed to bridge the popular and private practices of young people and the professional and public data practices of the Archive.

Ingredients

- An archive with space for activities
- Flipcharts and pens
- Blank postcards
- Lunch and refreshments

The event

The 'Curating Childhoods' workshop invited children and families from the Face 2 Face study to visit the Mass Observation Archive and to discuss the public archiving and potential reuse of their data. Throughout the Face 2 Face project, the research team had regularly discussed with the children and their families the prospect of archiving the dataset and what this would entail. Our impression during these conversations was that the archive remained quite an abstract space for many young people – imagined as quiet and 'dusty'. These misconceptions weren't limited to the children, but also the research team,

who were often uncertain what might happen to the project's data in the archive. Though the team had experience of depositing and accessing archive data as researchers, it was difficult for us to imagine who the full potential range of public archive users might be and to what ends they would use the data. Against a backdrop of growing archive-based scholarship (Moore et al. 2016) and secondary data analysis (Bishop 2009), we also felt it ethically necessary to explore with our participants how their data would be curated and what its potential future uses might be. Our approach was therefore to imagine our dataset as a site of co-production beyond the data collection process – whose future should be carefully negotiated between families, archivists and researchers. For MOA, the workshop was an opportunity to learn more about the expectations of children and parents for how the archive would care for and make publicly available their data. The past experience of the archive team had been that children, and particularly parents, were reticent to have their data made indefinitely public, even when anonymized (see discussion in Box 8.1). The workshop would therefore also provide the Archive with the chance to find out what reassurances children and parents might want about their data being publicly available.

Not all of the families involved in the original project were able to attend the workshop and, in total, six families (seven children and six adults) took part on the day. Of those in attendance, the majority were from the teenage research panel, who were keen to meet other children involved in the study. The workshop's first activities focused on imagining the potential audiences for an archive on Everyday Childhoods. In one exercise involving all children and adults (including archivists and researchers), scenarios were posed that asked each person to consider how 'comfortable' they would feel about anonymized archived data being accessed by different users (e.g. journalists, historians, students) and at different distances in time (ranging from a year to several decades). Participants were asked to position themselves along an imaginary scale that ranged from 'very comfortable' to 'very uncomfortable'. By encouraging all attendees to be involved in the activity, we aimed to create a reflective space in which children and adults could both directly engage and participate in discussions and where neither's viewpoint was privileged. For each scenario, participants were asked to share their reasons for their comfort or discomfort. In many cases, we observed children following their parent's lead, leading to uncertainty whether this always represented the child's own position. This wasn't the case, however, with a participant who had been accompanied by her older sister. In most scenarios, the sisters held vastly different opinions about how comfortable they would feel about research data being reused. This led to debates in which the elder sister would describe feeling more comfortable with how data was shared (e.g. with students or journalists) and the younger sister feeling less comfortable arguing 'I'd like to keep my privacy'.

Workshop participants were invited to write a postcard to an imaginary future user of the archive sharing their hopes for how the Everyday Childhoods collection would be used (see Figure 8.1). It was agreed in advance that these postcards would be archived in the Everyday Childhoods collection and would be required reading for anyone accessing the collection. This led to the postcards being treated as valuable means for communicating with the future users of the archive. Across the majority of the postcards were requests for the data collection to be treated with 'care' and 'respect', and a strong emphasis on the necessity of recognizing the original context in which the data was created. For many of the young people, and some parents, the postcards also gave voice to concerns that their words or actions might be misjudged or misinterpreted in the future. For some, this reflected a concern about historical distance and how present-day activities and interests might be viewed as 'strange' in the future. However, for a number of young people and parents, this reflected a concern that their data would be read and handled by an unknown archive user they would never meet. In discussions following the postcard activity, many of the parents described how they would be happy for the data to be used by researchers they knew, but would feel nervous about unfamiliar archive users. This provided a key learning point about the significance of careful planning in transferring care of data from researchers to archivists.

A final workshop activity split the group into sub-groups of younger children, older children, and parents, facilitated by either a researcher or archivist. The focus of these groups was to explore what individuals would be comfortable

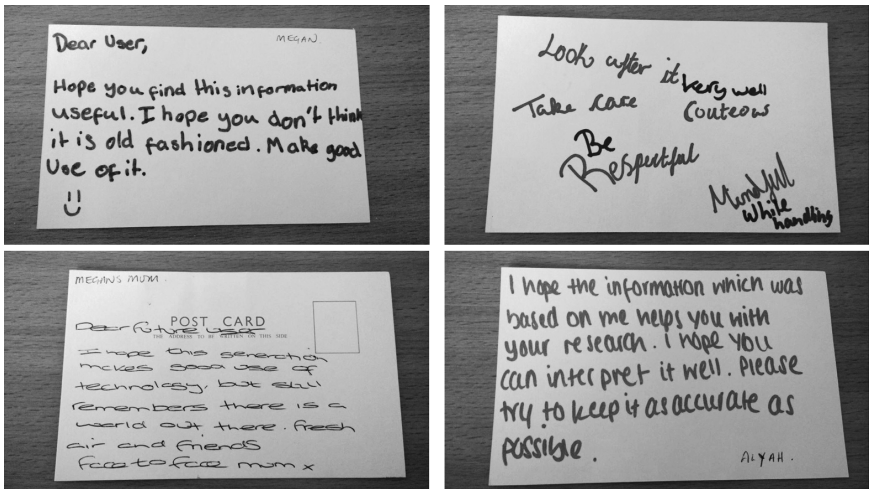

FIGURE 8.1 *Postcards to future archive users*

sharing in a public archive record of their (or their children's) everyday lives, and to reflect on who should be involved in making decisions about what can or cannot be shared. Separating the children and parents also provided an opportunity to explore different concerns and expectations about the archiving process. In the children's groups, we were particularly interested in comparing sharing with a public archive versus other everyday forms of sharing – for example, private sharing with friends or public sharing on social media. These scenarios provided particularly interesting insights into the nuanced landscapes of privacy and sharing that children and young people inhabit, particularly in terms of when they felt parents or other adults should be involved. In the case of many everyday forms of sharing, the eldest group of children portrayed themselves as confident in being able to manage what they made public and kept private – particularly amongst friends and peers, and via social media. Whilst they acknowledged they might sometimes need adult help, such as if they felt they had lost control of their privacy, they largely positioned themselves as confident sharers. When the discussion turned to the archive, however, we found that participants felt less confident about deciding what was made public. In this instance, parents were viewed as a welcome source of advice, and the children described how they had regularly discussed their involvement in the research with family members. When asked how far into the future they would still rely on their parent's advice for deciding what to archive, the young people all described being in their early or late twenties. In this instance, we were particularly struck by how presenting opportunities to shape decision making might be met with uncertainty and trepidation by the children, who may prefer the support of adults in making those decisions.

BOX 8.1 'Bringing children into the archive'. An interview with Fiona Courage, Curator of the Mass Observation Archive collection.

Liam: One of the reasons we felt the 'Curating Childhoods' project was significant and timely was the conspicuous absence of data on children's everyday lives in public archives. Prior to the current project, what records did Mass Observation have on children?

Fiona: Working with young people is an area that Mass Observation has traditionally steered clear of. In the organization's earliest phase, work in this area was limited to the observation of children by adults, and occasionally the collation of essays by teachers that were then sent in to Mass Observation as evidence of young people's opinions and attitudes. These essays were often written as part of a child's normal school work, meaning that the children may have been unaware of who they were writing for, or

indeed the use that would be made of their work. Whilst these essays provide a fascinating insight into opinions of Jews in 1938 or the wardrobes of teenagers in 1947, the fact that they were written with the consciousness of school work and the eye of the teacher upon spelling and grammar means that they may not be a true representation of the individual child's life. Rather, they are a response to what opinions or experiences they believed were expected of them.

In later years, Mass Observation has begun to collect work on recording life experiences of young people in the context of specific projects such as the Children's Millennium Diary project (Blackwell 2001). The project was led by a local community publisher working with schools in the Brighton area to encourage children to keep a diary for a week during the year 2000, to be added to an archive that would be kept by Mass Observation. More recently, schools have been invited to encourage pupils to take part in the annual call for 'day diaries' that Mass Observation puts out on 12th May each year. Numbers of participants under the age of 16 has grown each year, however only in terms of those diaries returned by schools. Young people outside of the context of school are not responding 'off their own back'.

Liam: How does the 'Everyday Childhoods' collection differ from other Mass Observation collections? Do you feel that it fits with the original ethos of Mass Observation?

Fiona: The Curating Childhoods project has allowed us to explore some of these issues and has given us the opportunity to understand some of the more practical and ethical issues that have restrained Mass Observation's attempts to record the lives of young people, particularly in recent years. The data collected throughout the project has allowed the young participants to shape their responses, satisfying the original objectives of Mass Observation that saw its participants as the 'the cameras with which we are trying to photograph contemporary life' (Madge & Harrison 1938). The idea that observers would be ordinary people recording their lives without scientific or academic training was an important one, as this served to provide the element of authenticity of real lives, rather than lives seen through the lens of the researcher. The data recorded by participants could then be made available for all to see, for use by all disciplines ranging from science to the arts. In this, the Curating Childhoods project has allowed us to continue in this ethos, as although the data was collected by researchers, it has been done so in a way that allows the participants to drive what is collected, what is recorded and what is seen of their lives.

Liam: You mentioned that there have been ethical restraints for Mass Observations collection of data with children, what are the particular ethical concerns of children's data from an archive perspective?

Fiona: Curating Childhoods gave us an important opportunity to explore some of the ethical issues that have constrained our work with young people

in the past. Since 1981, Mass Observation has operated on restricted funds as a Charitable Trust, reliant on project funding and royalties to be able to continue its own core project and to undertake other projects. As a result, there has been a tendency to play it safe, and to avoid ethical constraints by working with a panel made up of volunteer writers over the age of 16. As volunteers and adults, this panel is able to enter into a dialogue with the Archive to understand what use is made of their responses, and to give consent for its use. They are also able to conform to the need for anonymization, self-censoring details that may make them easily identifiable to researchers.

Liam: As part of the Curating Childhoods project, we jointly hosted a workshop at 'The Keep' Archive for children and families contributing data to the Everyday Childhoods collection. Is it common to bring data contributors into the archive? What did you learn from the workshop?

Fiona: One of the most important facets of this project was the opportunity to work closely with researchers creating and using these datasets. Understanding the way that research is driven, and taking the opportunity to discuss what both parties require to get the job done is an ideal but rare scenario. Archivists are often not present in the early stages of planning, meaning that data can be collected without the important metadata that is required to preserve it and allow its reuse in the future. Equally, they are unable to understand the drivers for research that inform how projects are designed.

The project also gave us the opportunity to work directly with young people and their carers to find out more about the understandings and concerns that they have relating to how the data that they provide for a specific project may be kept and made available for use in the future. Concerns that we had expected and that had constrained our actions in the past, were not seen as important as other aspects which took on far more significance than we had ever given credit to. Carers were more concerned about immediate reuse of data, whilst young people seemed very comfortable with this leading us to reflect on how contemporary use of social technology to 'share' life could create generational differences. More surprising to me was the response to use of data in years to come; whilst carers saw this is an opportunity to make a mark on future understandings of history, the young participants were concerned with the potential for misinterpretation and misunderstandings of their lives with the passage of time.

Reflections

One of the key learning points from the workshop was the important role of parents and family members in co-production projects with children and young people. The presence of parents and carers at our workshop may at times have influenced aspects of the children's participation – we also found that the

children sometimes felt more confident making decisions with their parent's help (see also Boddy 2013). Sharing data about their lives in a public archive (even anonymously) was an important and sometimes strange request for the children at the workshop, and being able to draw on the advice of parents or family members was seen as greatly valuable in deciding what to share. Though participatory methods are often framed in youth studies research as an opportunity to recognize and integrate young people's independent decision making within a project, this case study also serves to highlight how young people may also seek to draw on the experience of others to help support with decision making. Co-production can therefore also be a method that recognizes and reflects the distributive nature of agency (Oswell 2013), with youth participation supported by wider networks of help, encouragement and advice by significant others in their lives.

The workshop also served to highlight how co-production projects can usefully support the creation of new dialogues between groups who have not traditionally worked closely together. By holding the workshop in the archive, children and families could gain a first-hand sense of how their data would be curated and made publicly available. The workshop also provided opportunities for discussions and activities that collaboratively explored the ethics and responsibilities of sharing data publicly. These discussions sought to recognize the distribution of expertise within the group – drawing on the different ways that individuals conceptualized the responsibilities of an archive in sharing accounts of children's everyday lives. At a time when archiving of research data has become a standard practice, and for many UK research funders a 'default' practice[8], these discussions provided rich insights into the ethical terrain of co-producing an archive with children and their families.

The Hackathon: 'My Object Stories'

The third and final example of co-production is a digital research workshop for young people (aged 11–16 years) hosted in collaboration with the Mass Observation Archive. The workshop invited young people to explore how research archives could become a potentially creative space for collaboration and co-production. This involved young people creating data during a morning workshop and then 'hacking' and 'reanimating' that data in the afternoon with archivists, digital artists and developers. This workshop took inspiration from

[8]The Economic and Social Research Council's Research Data Policy (as of March 2015) is that 'All data created or repurposed during the lifetime of an ESRC grant must be made available for re-use or archiving within three months of the end of the grant' (http://www.esrc.ac.uk/funding/guidance-for-grant-holders/research-data-policy/).

the previous events described – providing young people with the opportunity to record data about their own lives, and to be involved in the data's curation and reuse.

Origins and inspirations

The workshop was partially inspired by the recent trend in 'hackathons' – collaborative events which bring together participants with diverse digital expertise to take part in a 'design sprint'. The hackathon first emerged in the late 1990s as an intensive format for collective programming activities, becoming significantly more widespread in the 2000s (Briscoe & Mulligan. 2014). The events often have a 'competitive' element to them, with multiple teams attempting to achieve a similar goal but through different means. More recently, it has become common to assemble cross-skill teams, including participants with a broad range of non-technical expertise, such as designers and marketing specialists. Our workshop didn't entirely fit the mould of a typical hackathon, but we nonetheless drew on some of the format's key features – most notably, the emphasis on creative and intensive co-production over a short timescale in a multiskilled team. One of the recent adopters of hackathons have been archives and libraries who have used the events as a way of 'opening up' their digitized collections and to experiment with creative ways of using their collections.

The workshop also drew inspiration from recent social science and humanities approaches of 'reanimating' data using participatory methods and drama techniques. McGeeney et al. (2017) describe how methods of 'revoicing' and 'reenactment' can generate new insights by inviting research participants to reflectively explore and handle data. They draw on the work of Elizabeth Freeman (2010), who describes how methods of revoicing can give rise to queer temporalities that connect moments in time in non-linear ways. The aim of our event was to encourage children to creatively experiment with their research data, and to explore different possibilities for its reanimation – with participants employing digital tools to experiment with the representation of their raw data and reflecting on how it might 'speak' to different public audiences in different 'cooked' forms (see our discussion in Chapter 2).

Ingredients

- A suitable hackathon venue (with plug sockets, wireless internet, tables/benches)
- Hardware supplies, for example, cables, laptops, webcams, fiducials, memory sticks, tablet computers

- Software, for example, programming tools, video editing software.
- Digital mentors with a mixed range of expertise (e.g. design, programming, sound engineering)
- Lunch, snacks and refreshments

The event

The 'My Object Stories' hackathon[9] was designed as an opportunity for young people to work collaboratively with archivists, researchers and digital developers to experiment with methods of 'reanimating' research data. The workshop's promotional materials emphasized that young people weren't required to have any specific technical experience or digital skills to take part. Instead, we aimed to create activities that would be accessible to all young people regardless of their digital proficiency – providing a supportive environment in which they could confidently experiment with creative 'reanimation'. To support young people's experimentation with less familiar digital tools, we put together a group of adult 'digital mentors' who would be on hand to provide short tutorials or coaching with different tools. These included volunteers with expertise spanning 3D design, programming, sound engineering and games design. With the mentor's support, participants would be encouraged explore a range of different hardware and software tools. In contrast with Space Invaders, which asked entrants to draw on their existing skills (particularly multimedia recording and editing), the hackathon invited participants to test out or discover unfamiliar tools and techniques. A small group of archivists and researchers were present on the day and took part in discussions with young people about their data and its reanimation.

The workshop was attended by three girls and four boys, and most participants attended with a friend or sibling. The young people all described themselves as reasonably confident with digital media, and a few were particularly interested in more complex digital skills such as computer programing. This included a couple of the older boys who were undertaking computer science as subjects at schools. In the morning, the young people were invited to record their object stories to create data for the hackathon. Inspired by the methods used in the Face 2 face study, each of the young people had brought along one or more objects to share, including a guitar, a retro games console, a pair of Dr Martens shoes and a One Direction poster. Both the creation and reanimation

[9]The 'My Object Stories' project (2015) was co-funded by the ESRC's Festival of Social Science and the EPSRC's Communities and Culture Network +, with additional support from the Mass Observation Archive, the Sussex Humanities Lab and the Centre for Innovation and Research in Childhood and Youth. The hackathon event was co-organized by Liam Berriman and Chris Kiefer.

of the data took place in the same day. During the morning, participants were invited to record a short story about a 'favourite' personal object, followed by an afternoon of exploring new ways of reanimating the data recordings using a range of digital programmes and tools. An 'Object Stories' booth was set up in the morning for the young people to record audio and visual data and in close collaboration with a film maker and a photographer, the young people recorded short audio narratives to convey the personal value of their objects, as well as a number of still images. After their multimedia data was uploaded to a memory stick, the young people were then able to begin planning how their data might be 'reanimated' using different digital tools and techniques.

Matching young people with data reanimation activities proved to be one of the most challenging elements of the workshop – particularly in ensuring that they had enough time and support to confidently experiment with their chosen digital platforms and tools. Despite the relatively small size of the group, time was quite limited for participants to create polished animations of their data. Over the course of the workshop, we arranged for a group digital installation to be led by two digital artists, with expertise in programming and sound engineering, that all participants would be able to contribute to over the day. This more ambitious installation would recognize children's objects using motion-tracking technology, and would audio-visually project 'object story' (images and audio recordings). However, getting young people involved in the design of this installation proved challenging on the day. One of the main barriers to participation was the complex and time-consuming amounts of line-by-line programming that the installation required. Though we were keen for the young people to learn about and be involved in the installation's development, the complexity of the programming often proved a barrier for the participants to be meaningfully involved. This knowledge and skills gap resulted in an uneven sense of responsibility and ownership for the installation, with the young people's participation largely limited to observing and providing occasional feedback on the design and development.

Instead, the young people's time was primarily distributed around other data reanimation activities that required only brief learning curves and could be assembled in relatively short periods of time. These activities included reanimating their object stories data using augmented reality apps, editing short movies in video editing software, and designing prototype video games. Most of the participants chose to move between activities, briefly experimenting with each in order to explore how their object stories could be told differently. A few decided to focus their time on one activity, and dedicated the afternoon to creating more polished data reanimations of their object stories. Though we had originally aimed for each young person to have their own data reanimation to share at the end of the workshop, we found that most participant enjoyment of the workshop came through the opportunity to play

FIGURE 8.2 *Zayn Malik's face is distorted on a One Direction flag to express upset with his departure from the group*

and experiment with different tools. In this respect, their participation did not entirely match our original expectation, but as this was a co-production project, we wanted to be flexible in allowing the young people's interests to guide their choice of activities.

By the end of the day, the group had generated a variety of reanimated object stories, though still in varying stages of completion. Two participants had developed short prototype video games where object stories could gradually be 'unlocked' and pieced together by playing the game. This included a game where the aim was to collect 'rare' GameCube discs and a multiple choice adventure game about discovering the book 'The Day of the Triffids' for the first time. A few other participants had experimented with an augmented reality app which had allowed them 'to bring their objects to life' and have the object tell its own story. This included a pair of plastic toy animals who described their rescue from a bin, and a One Direction poster where the band members described fan heartbreak and anger at Zayn Malik's departure from the band (see Figure 8.2). Whilst we had sought to ensure that all of the young people had a chance contribute to the activities of their own choosing, we learnt from a parent at the end of the workshop that their child had not had a chance to take part in one activity and had been too shy to ask. Though the workshop had ended, we offered to briefly rerun the activity one-on-one for their child. As with Space Invaders, this illustrated the significant role parents

can play in judging the 'fairness' and value of their child's participation in a research activity.

Reflections

Of the three examples described here, the hackathon workshop was most influenced by cross-disciplinary approaches to co-production – with young people positioned as both co-researchers and co-designers. It also most starkly illustrated the challenges of equipping all young people involved in an event with the skills and resources necessary to fully participate. In some instances, the skills threshold did prove too high and time limitations meant that young people didn't always have the opportunity to become fully involved in an animation project. However, we also found that a 'mixed economy' of participation could also be positive. Whilst some young people threw themselves into a single data animation activity, others preferred to float between different activities at their own pace. This resulted in a range of different data animations that might not otherwise have been produced by a group who all shared a similar skill level and confidence.

The hackathon also created new opportunities for knowledge exchange between the different partners involved, particularly between the young people and archivists. One of the aims of the event for was to learn new ways of working with young people to animate and bring archive data to life. For the archive team, who did not consider themselves particularly technically savvy, the event was an opportunity to learn from young people what forms of digital storytelling might be possible with archive data. Over the course of the workshop, this led to a number of interesting conversations between the archivists and young people about what stories could be told through objects and how the record of those stories might be reanimated using digital tools. Likewise, having archivists present at the workshop also provided the opportunity for young people to ask questions about why archives are interested in stories about their everyday and how those records are stored for future use.

Learning from co-production

Co-production presents a number of challenges for how we conceive children and young people's involvement in research. Over the course of the 'Everyday Childhoods' project we experimented with several different co-production methodologies as a way of opening up what young people's participation in research looks like and exploring new dynamics in the 'knowledge production' process. The interdisciplinary make-up of our project team proved valuable

in allowing us to interweave different traditions of co-production. From the project's conception, we questioned how our participants could become more involved in the research process – exploring the different kinds of roles that they (and sometimes their parents and carers) might play. We also sought to bring critical awareness to our experiments in co-production – identifying not only the dividends of rethinking children's contributions to research, but also the numerous complications that arise in pursuing a co-production model.

One of the main difficulties for co-production models is assessing their success in creating more equitable models of research between children and adults. Over the course of this chapter, we have attempted to critically reflect on what we felt worked in our project events, but also acknowledging what we felt didn't. Ideas of 'distributed' agency (Oswell 2013) have proven useful in this regard, providing a means of interrogating whether and to what extent the socio-material arrangement of different co-production activities might provide more symmetrical relationships between research partners. One of the main questions we have found ourselves coming back to time and again has been the extent to which our co-production models evenly distribute contributions, decision making and, ultimately, value and recognition between researchers and participants. This question has become a useful yardstick, allowing us to interrogate whether and to what extent we have enabled young people to make substantive contributions to the shape and direction of the research, and to be able to derive and extract value from it. In bringing these criteria to bear on our three examples, we have found quite a mixed picture. In some instances, our attempts at distributing participation within a project did not unfold in the ways we had anticipated. In the Curating Childhoods project, for example, we found that children could be uncertain about contributing to decisions affecting the archiving of their data, and often looked to the guidance of their parents or carers. Similarly, we found that our sense of the value young people might derive from a project did not always match the expectations of young people or their parents. In the case of the Space Invaders project, this came through in the discontent of some parents who judged the value of their child's participation based on their success in the competition. However, there were also many instances where we were surprised when unintended forms of value were derived from the research. In the 'My Object Stories' Hackathon, participants took pleasure from different parts of the workshop, such as recording their object's story or learning how to code a basic game in Unity. Whilst in the case of the Curating Childhoods project, we subsequently learnt that one young person had taken up work experience at the archive after enjoying the workshop.

A further challenge has been the rapidly changing digital affordances of co-production. Digital practices of documentary, curation and data animation have provided new opportunities for inviting children to take part in the

co-production of research. However, on occasions, these digital practices also posed barriers to participation. This became most apparent in the hackathon, when the digital coding expertise required to take part in particular aspects of the co-production process locked some or all of the young people out. In this instance, the project failed to anticipate how steep the learning curve would be and resulted in a barrier to participation. This might be indicative of a broader gulf between the digital practices of academics (researchers, designers, archivists, etc.) and the young people we seek to work with. As Thomson describes in Chapter 10, the shift towards more democratized models of research requires that we take account of the digital practices of research and curation that young people are already engaged in. However, as this chapter suggests, matching the digital practices of young people with academic research – particularly in a co-production context – can raise further challenges.

Co-production methodologies might be realistically conceived as ones in which fairer distributions of contribution, decision making, value and recognition are constantly strived for in research activities, but may not always be successful in the ways we hope or intend. It requires us to be flexible in our expectations and to be open to a model of research where the majority of insights will emerge through the process of collaboration, rather than at the final destination.